

Palace Casino Union negotiations update

Negotiations for a new Collective Agreement for the unionised Employees at the Palace Casino continued on February 24, 25 & 26 at the Mayfield Inn and Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton. Main bargaining topics included representational issues and a controversial company proposal to “merge” the positions of Pit Manager and Floor Supervisor/Pit Boss.

The issue of representation is, of course, a critical one for Employees. When you are in trouble at work it is essential that the company recognise your right to receive advice from your Union and to be represented in meetings to ensure that justice is done and the principle of fair play is front and center.

As you may know through the rumour mill, there is also an issue at the bargaining table that the company has raised, which could have significant impact on the lives of those who work as Floor Supervisors and Pit Managers and those who perform those duties as well in either a part time or “Acting” capacity.

The company says that they have applied to the AGLC to “merge” the two positions. What does this mean?

Your Union bargaining committee has commenced the process of grilling the company on this issue to determine if they are “up to something” or if it is a legitimate proposal in any way. We have asked the company to further particularise their position in writing and provide additional rationale for it. We have also asked the company for copies of their application to and their correspondence with the AGLC.

Some of our initial concerns were set out bluntly to the company. They suggest that there is no harm in the proposal and that Floor Supervisors will simply be asked if they want to accept a promotion. What’s the big deal?

There may indeed be a “big deal”. The position of Floor Supervisor is held by good people who have worked hard to acquire an enhanced level of responsibility at a good rate of pay while maintaining the security and stability that comes with the protection of having a Union. As you will recall, people fought very hard to have that Union protection through a strike of 10 months

in duration. If that job is gone, the company suggests that you might be able to take the promotion or stay in the Union at a bargaining unit position, perhaps as a Dealer.

We have argued that this could be a painful and unfair choice to have to make. Move up or move down. In the former case you may get a fancy title and some more money but your job security is gone and you may be facing having to work an excessive number of hours for a salary. If you accept the position and the company doesn't like you, once out of the Union, the ability to file a grievance and oppose discipline or even termination through the strength of your Union is gone. In the latter circumstance, even if the company was prepared to pay you the same amount of money, the skills you have developed in order to bring meaning to your career and perform an enhanced role are effectively flushed down the toilet in order for you to hang on to the hard fought victory of Union job security.

Once again, we urge people not to gossip or panic with respect to this issue. Bargaining on the matter has just commenced and we cannot yet know the result of negotiations. The company's position, on this, they advised us on the last day of bargaining, might be amended and reconsidered by them. But it has not been yet. Why eliminate the Floor Supervisor position? The company has the current ability to promote people into Pit Manager positions, if they need to. It is an important time to talk to your bargaining committee and your Union Representative and sort out your own thoughts on this issue. Should your Union bargaining committee oppose this no matter what? Is the company's proposal acceptable in any form and if so, at what price? We do not see any reason whatsoever to eliminate the Floor Supervisor job from the workplace.

Bargaining will continue on March 17, 18 & 19.

Sincerely,

Your Union bargaining committee